

to them via FTP over the Internet, however, a preferred way would be to provide vendors with software which permits them to schedule when they wish to communicate with the quotation system. In this case, the vendor software would contact the quotation system over the Internet via FTP; the quotation system would [interrogate] **interrogate** the vendor's product database (using suitable software which links or cross references the vendor's inventory to the quotation system product and services lists) and retrieve pricing and other information necessary to respond to the RFQ; and thereafter prepare e-mail to be sent to the requesting buyer member. FIG. 8 shows one possible arrangement of RFQ data which would be e-mailed to a buyer. In this example a request for quotation is sent for 5,000 OH006-2000656 type J resistors manufactured by Ohmite for delivery by Aug. 1, 1993. The buyer indicates that the delivery date is firm. Other information such as RFQ date, tracking number and product code are shown. In this case the sender has specified that this request for quotation be routed to vendors in the state of New Jersey USA only. The lower portion of FIG. 6 shows a response [from] **form** for example Acme Supply, Inc. together with pricing, contact information, delivery and vendor notes indicating that the request can be "Shipped 1000 per box from inventory, subject to prior sale." The e-mail could be configured as HTML by the buyer's browser directly or via application helper software provided by the quotation system. One advantage to providing buyers with HTML type e-mail quotations is that hypertext links can be embedded in the quotation along with data about the quotation which would permit the buyer to select a response option directly from the quotation HTML page. The option may be to request that an e-mail purchase order be sent to a vendor and that the buyer's